



DATE: February 28, 2023

TO: Appropriations Committee

FROM: Joe Goldsmith, Regional Network Director, Youth Villages

RE: HB-6659 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND
MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR

Good afternoon Chairs Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Vice Chairs Lesser, Gilchrest, Ranking Members Berthel and Nuccio and other members of the committee.

For the record, my name is Joe Goldsmith and I serve as Regional Network Director of Strategic Partnerships for Youth Villages. I am here today to ask the Committee provide full funding for the very successful **Youth Transition Success Programs** (TSEA is known in provider settings and in this testimony). This program was set up in 2019 with an annual funding \$500,000 from DCF and \$500,000 of **temporary** philanthropic funds. Those \$1.5 million of philanthropic funds have now been exhausted and in order to continue providing current level services for the vulnerable population of youth aging out of the foster care system and additional \$500,000 per year must be allocated.

Failure to fully fund this program will cut an one of a kind, data driven, successful program that serves Connecticut's youth who are transferring out of foster care. This cut to programmatic funding will result in closing one of the programs or reducing capacity and providing this vital service to the children who need it most. As detailed in this testimony, and in other documentation which can be provided to the Committee, it is clear money invested in this program is an investment in ensuring young adults have the skills they need to be successful, productive members of society and significantly reduce risks of negative interactions with law enforcement or incarcerations and significantly increases gainful employment, avoiding homelessness and furthering their education.

Since 1999, Youth Villages has implemented the Transitional Supports for Emerging Adults (TSEA) Program, which serves 17-22-year olds who are leaving the foster care, juvenile justice and mental health systems, by giving them the support and guidance they need to make a successful transition to adulthood. Findings from a rigorous random assignment evaluation of our model showed that young adults who received the program fared better in several outcome domains compared to those in a control group. Namely, participants who received TSEA showed improved outcomes related to employment, earnings, and mental health and reduced instances of intimate partner violence, economic hardships, and risk of homelessness than those not receiving TSEA services. TSEA has helped over 25,000 young adults across the country transition to independence since its inception in

1999. The program is currently offered in 18 states and Washington, D.C., either through direct service delivery by Youth Villages staff or through licensing and training high-quality local nonprofit organizations to implement the program in their own communities.

With the support of both Youth Villages and the Department of Children and Families, Community Health Resources (DCF regions 3 & 4) and Wheeler Clinic (DCF regions 6 & part of 5) began implementing the TSEA model in Connecticut since 2019. Since then, over 200 young adults have been served in the program. Upon exiting TSEA, 86% of participants were living independently, with family or other supports, or in a stable foster home; 92% avoided or reduced their frequency of arrests; and 95% of participants had obtained, at minimum, their high school education or enrolled in an educational program to obtain their high school education, were employed, or both. Of the 20 young adults surveyed 1 year after exiting the program, 95% had avoided arrests, and 100% had housing and employment and/or educational stability. These outcomes are consistent with our national results and highlight the positive long-term impact the program has on young adults in the state of Connecticut. Additionally, when compared with available state-specific data collected through the National Youth in Transition Database, young adults who participated in TSEA were more successful with obtaining a high school education, gaining employment, avoiding homelessness, and avoiding legal involvement.

DCF brought TSEA to Connecticut to fill a need for more robust services as well as due to the program's demonstrated positive outcomes for young adults in foster care – outcomes that had previously been lacking. Half of this program has been philanthropically funded since 2019 through a time-limited matching grant that requires long-term public funding for the program. With philanthropic dollars no longer available, TSEA is now at risk of reducing its available capacity by 50%, which in return would take away access to the program in half of the current service area. With an investment of an additional \$500,000 per year, 2 teams will be fully funded to continue serving roughly two-thirds of the state. TSEA will be able to support around 80 young adults every day and complement existing services available to adolescents in DCF's care by serving the needs of young adults experiencing more complex challenges.

We are asking that the Committee and the legislature allocate an additional \$500,000 to continue funding operations. We would look forward to a future date where funding is available to offer this service to all DCF regions so all young people transitioning out of the foster care system in Connecticut can learn the skills needed to be successful adults.

I appreciate and applaud the investments you've historically made towards young adults in Connecticut. I hope you'll consider this additional investment in some of the most at-risk youth in the state. Thank you.